

METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR OPERATING GAS TURBINE ENGINES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates generally to gas turbine engines, more particularly to methods and apparatus for operating gas turbine engines.

[0002] At least some known gas turbine engines include a core engine having, in serial flow arrangement, a fan assembly and a high pressure compressor which compress airflow entering the engine, a combustor which burns a mixture of fuel and air, and low and high pressure rotary assemblies which each include a plurality of rotor blades that extract rotational energy from airflow exiting the combustor.

[0003] Combustion gases are discharged from the core engine through an exhaust assembly. More specifically, within at least some known turbofan engines, a core exhaust nozzle discharges core exhaust gases radially inwardly from a concentric fan exhaust nozzle which exhausts fan discharge air therefrom for producing thrust. Generally during engine operation, both exhaust flows approach their maximum velocity during high power engine operations, such as during take-off operations. During such operations, as the high velocity flows interact with each other and with ambient air flowing past the engine, substantial noise may be produced along the take-off path of the aircraft.

[0004] To facilitate reducing such noise, at least some known turbine engine exhaust assemblies utilize noise suppression equipment which includes at least one of tabs, mixing lobes, and/or a plurality of chevrons to enhance mixing the core and bypass exhaust flows. Although the tabs, mixing lobes, and chevrons facilitate suppressing noise during high power engine operating conditions, because the tabs, mixing lobes, and chevrons are mechanical devices which remain positioned in the flow path during all flight conditions, such devices may adversely impact engine performance during non-take-off operating conditions. Specifically, during cruise

conditions, the tabs, the mixing lobes, and/or the chevrons may adversely impact specific fuel consumption (SFC) of the engine.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0005] In one aspect, a method for operating a gas turbine engine is provided. The method includes channeling compressed air from the gas turbine engine to a noise suppression system, and selectively operating the noise suppression system such that air discharged from the noise suppression system generates a plurality of flow control mechanisms in the gas turbine exhaust flowpath.

[0006] In another aspect, an assembly for a gas turbine engine is provided. The assembly includes a gas turbine nozzle, and a noise suppression system coupled to the gas turbine nozzle, the noise suppression system is selectively operable to facilitate generating a plurality of flow control mechanisms in the gas turbine nozzle flowpath.

[0007] In a further aspect, a gas turbine engine is provided. The gas turbine engine includes a core engine nozzle, a fan nozzle, and a noise suppression system coupled to at least one of the core engine nozzle and the fan nozzle, the noise suppression system is selectively operable to facilitate generating a plurality of flow control mechanisms in at least one of the core engine nozzle exhaust flowpath and the fan nozzle exhaust flowpath.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] Figure 1 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary gas turbine engine;

[0009] Figure 2 is a side view of an exemplary noise suppression system that may be used with the gas turbine engine shown in Figure 1;

[0010] Figure 3 is a perspective view of the noise suppression system shown in Figure 2;

[0011] Figure 4 is a side view of an alternative embodiment of a noise suppression system that may be used with the gas turbine engine shown in Figure 1; and

[0012] Figure 5 is a perspective view of the noise suppression system shown in Figure 4.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] Figure 1 is a schematic illustration of a gas turbine engine 10 including a fan assembly 12 and a core engine 13 including a high pressure compressor 14, and a combustor 16. Engine 10 also includes a high pressure turbine 18, and a low pressure turbine 20. Fan assembly 12 includes an array of fan blades 24 extending radially outward from a rotor disc 26. Engine 10 has an intake side 28 and an exhaust side 30. In one embodiment, the gas turbine engine is a GE90 available from General Electric Company, Cincinnati, Ohio. Fan assembly 12 and turbine 20 are coupled by a first rotor shaft 31, and compressor 14 and turbine 18 are coupled by a second rotor shaft 32.

[0014] An exhaust assembly 33 extends downstream from core engine 13 and includes an annular fan exhaust nozzle 34 that extends around, and is spaced radially outwardly from, a core engine exhaust nozzle 35. More specifically, fan exhaust nozzle 34 is positioned upstream from core exhaust nozzle 35 and is spaced radially outwardly from core engine exhaust nozzle 35 such that an annular bypass stream outlet 36 is defined between fan exhaust nozzle 34 and an engine cowling 37 extending circumferentially around core engine 13.

[0015] Core engine exhaust nozzle 35 also has an annular outlet 38 defined between an inner surface 39 of cowling 37 and an outer surface 40 of a centerbody or center plug 41. In an alternative embodiment, core engine exhaust nozzle 35 is known as a long-ducted mixed flow exhaust and is discharged into stream outlet 36 upstream from centerbody 41, such that core combustion gases are mixed with bypass stream flow prior to the mixture being discharged from exhaust assembly

33. In the exemplary embodiment, centerbody 41 extends aftward from core engine 13 such that core exhaust nozzle outlet 38 is upstream from an aft end 42 of centerbody 48. In an alternative embodiment, centerbody 41 does not extend downstream from nozzle outlet 38, and rather nozzle outlet 38 is downstream from centerbody 41.

[0016] During operation, air flows through fan assembly 12 and compressed air is supplied to high pressure compressor 14. The highly compressed air is delivered to combustor 16. Airflow (not shown in Figure 1) from combustor 16 drives turbines 18 and 20, and turbine 20 drives fan assembly 12 by way of shaft 31. More specifically, to produce thrust from engine 10, fan discharge flow is discharged through fan exhaust nozzle 34, and core combustion gases are discharged from engine 10 through core engine exhaust nozzle 35. In one embodiment, engine 10 is operated at a relatively high bypass ratio which is indicative of the amount of fan air which bypasses core engine 13 and is discharged through fan exhaust nozzle 34. In an alternative embodiment, gas turbine engine 10 is operable with a low bypass ratio.

[0017] Figure 2 is a side view of an exemplary noise suppression system 50 that can be used with gas turbine engine 10. Figure 3 is a perspective view of noise suppression system 50. In an exemplary embodiment, noise suppression system 50 is operably coupled to core engine exhaust nozzle 35. Noise suppression system 50 includes a manifold 52 coupled to core engine exhaust nozzle 35 such that manifold 52 circumscribes core engine exhaust nozzle 35. Compressed air is channeled from an air source 54 through an actuation valve 56 into manifold 52. In the exemplary embodiment, air is supplied to manifold 52 from at least one of fan assembly 12, high pressure compressor 14, high pressure turbine 18, or low pressure turbine 20.

[0018] Noise suppression system 50 also includes a plurality of tubes 60 coupled to manifold 52 and operated such that air is discharged from manifold 52 through plurality of tubes 60 and into a core engine exhaust stream 85. In other embodiments, noise suppression system 50 does not utilize tubes 60, but rather air is discharged into core engine exhaust stream 85 through other means. Accordingly, in

the exemplary embodiment, each tube 60 includes an upstream end 62, a downstream end 64, and a length 66 that is measured between upstream end 62 and downstream end 64, respectively. In the exemplary embodiment, length 66 is sized such that upstream end 62 is coupled to manifold 52 and downstream end 64 is coupled to an end 68 of engine exhaust nozzle 35. In the exemplary embodiment, tubes 60 are arranged in tube pairs 70 wherein each tube pair 70 includes a first tube 72 and a second tube 74.

[0019] In the exemplary embodiment, noise suppression system 50 includes eight pairs 70 of tubes 60 arranged azimuthally around an outer periphery of engine exhaust nozzle 35. In an alternative embodiment, tubes 60 are not arranged in pairs. In the exemplary embodiment, each tube 60 is substantially hollow, has a substantially circular cross-sectional profile, and includes an opening 76 that extends along length 66 of tube 60. Alternatively, tube 60 does not have a circular cross-sectional profile. In the exemplary embodiment, noise suppression system 50 includes four pairs 70 of tubes 60 arranged azimuthally around an outer periphery of core engine exhaust nozzle 35. Tubes 72 and 74 are separated by a first angle 78. In the exemplary embodiment, first angle 78 is approximately equal to thirty degrees. In another embodiment, tubes 72 and 74 are separated by a first angle 78 that is approximately equal to sixty degrees. Furthermore, each tube pair 70 is oriented at an injection angle 80 that is measured with respect to a centerline axis 82. Although noise suppression system 50 is shown as coupled to an outer periphery of core engine exhaust nozzle 35, it should be realized that noise suppression system 50 could also be coupled to an inner periphery of core engine exhaust nozzle 35.

[0020] During operation, air discharged from each tube pair 70 is discharged into core engine exhaust stream 85 such that the compressed air entering core engine exhaust stream 85 generates a flow control mechanism. For example, in the exemplary embodiment, each tube pair 70 generates a streamwise vorticity that is substantially analagous to a similar streamwise vorticity that is generated by a mechanical chevron nozzle. However, unlike mechanical chevrons, noise suppression system 50 can be operated in either an activated mode or a de-activated mode. When

noise suppression system 50 is operated in the activated mode, air is supplied into manifold 52 and distributed substantially uniformly among the plurality of tube pairs 70. Since each tube pair 70 includes a first tube 72 and a second tube 74 that are offset by a pre-defined angle 78 and a predefined angle 80, air discharged from each tube pair 70 simulates that discharged from a mechanical chevron nozzle. When noise suppression system 50 is deactivated, no air is channeled through tube pairs 70.

[0021] Figure 4 is a side view of an exemplary noise suppression system 150 that can be used with gas turbine engine 10. Figure 5 is a perspective view of noise suppression system 150. Noise suppression system 150 is substantially similar to noise suppression system 50, (shown in Figures 3 and 4) and components of noise suppression system 150 that are identical to components of noise suppression system 50 are identified in Figures 4 and 5 using the same reference numerals used in Figures 3 and 4.

[0022] In an exemplary embodiment, noise suppression system 150 is operably coupled to fan nozzle 34. Noise suppression system 150 includes a manifold 52 coupled to engine exhaust nozzle 35 such that manifold 52 circumscribes core engine exhaust nozzle 35. Compressed air is channeled from an air source 54 through an actuation valve 56 into manifold 52. In the exemplary embodiment, air is supplied to manifold 52 from at least one of fan assembly 12, high pressure compressor 14, high pressure turbine 18, or low pressure turbine 20. Alternatively, air may be supplied from any other pressurized air source. In another alternative embodiment, synthetic jets are utilized within noise suppression system 50, and as such, no pressurized air is supplied to noise suppression system 50.

[0023] Noise suppression system 150 also includes a plurality of tubes 60 coupled to manifold 52 and operated such that air is discharged from manifold 52 through plurality of tubes 60 and into a fan nozzle exhaust stream 87. Accordingly, each tube 60 includes an upstream end 62, a downstream end 64, and a length 66 that is measured between upstream end 62 and downstream end 64, respectively. In the exemplary embodiment, length 66 is sized such that upstream end 62 is coupled to manifold 52 and downstream end 64 is coupled to an end 36 of fan

nozzle 35. In the exemplary embodiment, tubes 60 are arranged in tube pairs 70 wherein each tube pair 70 includes a first tube 72 and a second tube 74.

[0024] In the exemplary embodiment, noise suppression system 150 includes eight pairs 70 of tubes 60 arranged azimuthally around an outer periphery of engine exhaust nozzle 35. Each tube 60 is substantially hollow and includes an opening 76 that extends along length 66 of tube 60. In one embodiment opening 76 is approximately 0.125 inches in diameter. In another embodiment, opening 76 is approximately 0.0625 inches in diameter. In the exemplary embodiment, noise suppression system 50 includes four pairs 70 of tubes 60 arranged azimuthally around an outer periphery of core engine exhaust nozzle 35. Tubes 72 and 74 are separated by a first angle 78. In the exemplary embodiment, first angle 78 is approximately equal to thirty degrees. In another embodiment, tubes 72 and 74 are separated by a first angle 78 that is approximately equal to sixty degrees. Furthermore, each tube pair 70 is oriented at an injection angle 80 that is measured with respect to a centerline axis 82. Although noise suppression system 150 is shown as coupled to an outer periphery of fan nozzle 34, it should be realized that noise suppression system 150 could also be coupled to an inner periphery of fan nozzle 34.

[0025] During operation, air discharged from each tube pair 70 is discharged into fan nozzle exhaust stream 87 such that the compressed air entering fan nozzle exhaust stream 87 simulates a streamwise vorticity that is analagous to a similar streamwise vorticity that is generated by a mechanical chevron nozzle. However, unlike mechanical chevron nozzles, noise suppression system 150 can be operated in either an activated mode or a de-activated mode. When noise suppression system 50 is operated in the activated mode, air is supplied into manifold 52 and distributed substantially uniformly among the plurality of tube pairs 70. Since each tube pair 70 includes a first tube 72 and a second tube 74 that are offset by a predefined angle 78 and a predefined angle 80, the air discharged from each tube pair 70 into fan nozzle exhaust stream 87 simulates a similar streamwise vorticity that is generated by a mechanical chevron nozzle. When noise suppression system is deactivated, no air is channeled through tube pairs 70.

[0026] The above-described noise suppression system includes a manifold and plurality of pairs of hollow injection tubes coupled to the manifold. Each pair of tubes discharges air into either the fan nozzle exhaust stream or the core engine exhaust stream such that the discharged air enables the tubes to simulate the function of a mechanical eight-lobed chevron nozzle. Accordingly, the tubes facilitate decreasing engine noise when the noise suppression system is activated. More specifically, the above-described noise suppression system includes a manifold and plurality of pairs of hollow tubes that are oriented at complex angles which are selected to enable the air discharged into either the core engine exhaust stream or the fan engine exhaust stream to be discharged at a desired injection velocity, a desired relative velocity, and a desired mass-flow-rate that are variably selected to simulate the effects that may be generated by a mechanical chevron.

[0027] The injection flow can be controlled to facilitate maximizing the effect during take-off and landing, and can also be activated when desired or deactivated when not desired, e.g. during cruise, to facilitate eliminating performance penalties during most of the flight duration. Moreover, the noise suppression system can be operated either continuously or by pulsating control valve 56. Operating the noise suppression system by pulsating valve 56 facilitates increasing effective amount of secondary airflow injected into the exhaust stream by reducing the quantity of air required. Accordingly, the noise suppression system described herein facilitates reducing noise during takeoff or landing, and reducing or eliminating engine performance losses during cruise conditions. Moreover, the noise suppression system described herein can also be operated to facilitate reducing an infra-red signature generated by engine 10.

[0028] In other words, the fluidic injection system described herein includes a plurality of opposed vortex pairs that are distributed azimuthally around the jet shear layer of the gas turbine engine. The vortex pairs inject small "jets" of compressed air into the jet shear layer at an angle to the main flow which induces the formation of relatively small longitudinal vortices. The relatively small longitudinal vortices facilitate enhancing mixing between the core and fan flow, and between the

fan and ambient flows and thereby facilitate reducing jet noise. Moreover, the enhanced mixing also facilitates reducing an infra-red signature generated by engine 10.

[0029] In the exemplary embodiment, the noise suppression system described herein facilitates reducing the gas turbine noise at substantially all operational frequencies. Additionally, increasing the injection velocity of air channeled through the tube pairs facilitates reducing the gas turbine noise.

[0030] Exemplary embodiments of noise suppression systems and exhaust assemblies are described above in detail. The noise suppression systems are not limited to the specific embodiments described herein, but rather, components of each assembly may be utilized independently and separately from other components described herein. For example, each noise suppression component can also be used in combination with other exhaust assemblies and/or with other noise suppression systems. Moreover, and for example, each noise suppression component can also be used in combination with engine assemblies that include mixing lobes and/or tabs to facilitate noise suppression and/or infra-red signature reduction.

[0031] While the invention has been described in terms of various specific embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be practiced with modification within the spirit and scope of the claims.